

School that work for everyone – consultation response

5 How can we better understand the impact of policy on a wider cohort of pupils whose life chances are profoundly affected by school but who may not qualify or apply for free school meals?

Many schools in areas of higher deprivation do also have a significant number of families who are just about managing. Those children are often those who struggle to afford to pay additional learning experiences and participate in broader social activities within their communities. Understanding the interconnection of a range of policies on these particular families is essential.

The pupil premium gap is a helpful measure to understand the impact of policy on those living in economic disadvantage, but this is only one vulnerable group. To better understand impact on policy on those who may not qualify for free school meals the government should also measure the educational progress on the following cohorts:

- Pupils with special educational needs and or a disability
- Children who are considered and assessed by the Local Authority to be children in need
- Young people who are not accessing 25 hours education

We are sure that there are additional vulnerable families where additional measures, targeting educational progress measures could be helpful to understand the impact on policy.

6 How can we identify them?

The Government currently uses the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) which is a supplementary index of the English Indices of Deprivation 2015. It is a measure of the proportion of children (aged 0 to 15) living in income deprived families.

Income deprived families are defined as families that receive:

- Income Support; or
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance; or
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance; or
- Pension Credit (Guarantee); or
- Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit with an equivalised income (excluding housing benefit) below 60 per cent of the national median before housing costs

It is recommended that this score is used to identify families who are just about managing.

7 What contribution could the biggest and most successful independent schools make to the state school system?

Independent schools can support the state system in a number of ways, if the school has the skills and capacity and willingness to do so. They should highlight and promote the ways in which they already contribute to the sector. They should work in partnership with local schools and participate in local networks of support. They should deliver extra curriculum activities including master classes to their wider communities and ensure that their facilities are able to be accessed by the wider community.

We would like to see independent schools to consider their arrangements for admissions and publicise any scholarships they have available to local schools and families so that they can consider this as an option and offer sponsorship to vulnerable pupils including looked after children. We believe that independent schools should offer sponsorships so that cohorts within the school have greater diversity and in turn offer further social mobility. They should also offer specialist teachers in subject shortage areas to provide high quality teaching and/or training to mainstream schools.

8 Are there other ways in which independent schools can support more good school places and help children of all backgrounds to succeed?

Yes - all schools have a unique contribution to make towards sector led improvement. As above, independent schools can provide additionality to their community and to other schools. The independent sector could support more good places and help children of all backgrounds to succeed if they have the skills, capacity and the right ethos to do this. This is highly individual and subject to individual leadership and governance arrangements at school level.

There is nothing to suggest that the sector does not have this level of skill, capability or capacity but the consultation does not say how the government intends to assess this. This must be clear and must be robust. Allowing independent schools to set up new schools or to grow to meet demand of new school places without a robust assessment of capability may lead to fewer pupils having a good education.

9 Are these the right expectations to apply to all independent schools to ensure they do more to improve state education locally?

No - the skills required in the diverse state schools are much broader than those in independent schools. Reassurances would need to be gained to ensure that independent schools have the knowledge, capacity and ability to deal with greater needs within the larger system of early help for vulnerable pupils.

There would also need to be an assessment of appropriateness, to ensure the partnership between independent and others schools is the correct one, enabling all learners to thrive.

Consideration should also be given to what the focus of the relationship is. We are not confident that all Independent Schools have the knowledge and expertise to

provide leadership and management across a national curriculum that they do not necessarily follow themselves. Certainly, the Independent Schools Conference in early October 2016 has heard a variety of concerns come from the Independent sector itself which would provide an early indicator of their position and ability to offer the proposal currently. Also, the paper makes the assumption that Independent Schools are better than other schools and we would request that the evidence for this be published and shared in a way that makes the comparison to other schools and academies equitable.

The mechanism for identifying and matching schools needs to be a sophisticated one that works clearly for outcomes for learners. We are already seeing the impact when this match is not correct in Multi Academy Trusts. Consequently, we would request that there is a clear, robust and transparent definition of 'good' be published that is applicable across the proposals so that we have the understanding to comment on any potential proposals. Currently, what good looks like is not based within the same framework and therefore means the premise of 'good' is not possible.

10 What threshold should we apply to capture those independent schools that have the capacity to sponsor or set up a new school or offer funded places and to exempt those that do not?

This needs very careful consideration and we would have welcomed some proposals on which to comment. Good teaching is not enough to support vulnerable pupils to thrive: they need wider support and the school is the first point of support for many families.

There needs to be a clear identification of strengths and capacity across the range of leadership and management. Such schools should have a proven track record with disadvantaged youngsters and working in partnership with families; they should be able to demonstrate effective practices and a proven track record of achieving excellent outcomes for learners across all Key Stages.

Independent schools should be required to meet similar expectations as those placed on Multi Academy Trusts and Teaching Schools – they should undergo an external assessment to judge their capability and capacity. We would want to see a willingness to work with other schools and a motivation to influence the system. Ofsted could have a role in incentivising this.

11 Is setting benchmarks the right way to implement these requirements?

Yes - If benchmarking did not occur, mismatch relationships would be created that could cause drift and delay for school improvement and in turn outcomes for learners, which in time may well result in wasted resources and repeated change of structures for no positive purpose.

12 Should we consider legislation to allow the Charity Commission to revise its guidance, and to remove the benefits associated with charitable status from those independent schools which do not comply?

No - it is essential to recognise that independent schools must be rigorously assessed and be in a position to positively contribute to the education system in a broader sense.

If it is demanded that independent schools support others when they do not have the skills and expertise, it will do little to improve the system. We believe that an incentivised approach would be more motivational, engaging and be instantly based on wanting to have an impact, rather than doing it under threat of viability with the removal of its charitable status benefits.

13 Are any other changes necessary to secure the Government's objectives?

The policy needs to be much more explicit about how it will impact on outcomes for pupils with SEND. Many disadvantaged learners are assessed as having SEND and they are a vulnerable cohort in their own right. Good schools that work for everyone must have significant reference to this group. In terms of social mobility, these learners also have the right to this access and need a clearly defined pathway for achieving it.

The definition of 'good' needs to be exemplified to understand the framework in which these objectives are presented.

Participation and connection of Independent Schools with teaching schools should be promoted. The offer that Independent Schools have to their communities should be promoted and highlighted so that there is transparency and ease of access for all.

In addition, the consultation fails to address the needs of pupils who are excluded from mainstream school – As this number is increasing and social mobility is seriously affected without access to mainstream schooling, the needs of these children should feature in any policy paper regarding social mobility. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the proposals need developing to include and recognise alternative and specialist provision.

14 How can the academic expertise of universities be brought to bear on our schools system, to improve school-level attainment and in doing so widen access?

Universities have a large number of academic resources and research that could be highly valuable to schools across the country. Working together with Teaching Schools would be beneficial in broadening the range on offer to schools across the sector. This could be around a number of areas including:

- subject knowledge development
- teacher development programmes e.g. Masters
- flexible teaching qualifications and training in specialist shortage areas such as coding, science, etc.

- offering tutoring or masterclasses for schools to commission for groups, individuals
- teacher recruitment
- access programmes for those who are vulnerable
- access to free university education for looked after children through sponsorship arrangements

15 Are there other ways in which universities could be asked to contribute to raising school-level attainment?

Yes - universities as part of their widening access funding, should be required to publish a local offer of programmes accessible to the mainstream. This should be publicised within regions to ensure schools can make use of it as an additional level of support to disadvantaged families and families who are just about managing. Central to this is the potential for universities to offer aspiration days that stimulate, intrigue and engage learners in a variety of subject areas. This would stimulate pupils to aim high and be clear on how they can achieve their ambitions. For example, an engineering day including design and manufacturing would provide learners with the insight required to make life long decisions about who they want be and how they can achieve it.

It would be beneficial for universities to work in partnership with secondary schools and colleges to break down the barriers preventing disadvantaged pupils and those from 'families who are just about managing' from attending university. However, exemplification and examples of how 'good' universities may directly develop improved outcomes for learners is required to illustrate how the connection will be made. Particularly, an assumption is being made that universities are automatically able to improve a secondary school/academy. We would question how this can be evidenced when the outputs of the two systems are measured and evaluated differently.

16 Is the DfA guidance the most effective way of delivering these new requirements?

No – this will make universities enter into arrangements based on necessity rather than ability and motivation to impact on school outcomes. The risk here is that schools will be supported or run by universities, without the university necessarily being the most skilled, the most appropriate or most able to have the greatest impact of learners. If the arrangement fails, further resource and structural change will have to happen, disrupting education further. In September, the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University publically rejected the idea of running schools due to lack of experience. This picture is likely to be replicated in other Russell Group universities and we may see smaller HE institutions stepping into this space – the University of Chester's Multi Academy Trust has been operating for several years and it is currently barred from taking over new schools due to concerns about performance.

17 What is the best way to ensure that all universities sponsor schools as a condition of higher fees?

Where this is assessed as appropriate, using a transparent and agreed universal description of what 'good' is, we think the best way to achieve this is to work with the sector to ensure that they have capacity and competency in the areas that they are being asked to develop and support within the sponsoring arrangement. For example, an art and design predominantly focussed university, may not be well positioned to run a school requiring better attainment across attainment 8 subjects.

18 Should we encourage universities to take specific factors into account when deciding how and where to support school attainment?

Yes, where universities are identified as having the capacity and the capability, support should be targeted to the schools with the greatest number of disadvantaged children and young people.

19 How should we best support existing grammars to expand?

Lincolnshire is a partial selective authority so any proposals to expand existing grammar schools must be based on a careful needs assessment which balances the needs of parents, the needs of demographics/ sufficiency of places and which does not lead to other schools becoming unviable or unsustainable. Additionally, urgent clarification is required around how home to school transport costs will be funded as part of this proposal, as this could have a significant impact in Lincolnshire.

Selective schools do have significantly better educational outcomes for learners, but they also have a significantly smaller proportion of FSM/ SEND/ LAC children within them. Most selective schools have below 3% FSM (disadvantaged pupils) whereas non-selective schools have approximately 18% FSM (disadvantaged pupils). Therefore, the admission arrangements for any future selective schools need to ensure that the proportion of groups is more representative and equitable to the communities they serve and that the curriculum diet offered enables those pupils to thrive. As a consequence, it must be recognised that some non-selective schools make as good progress as selective schools with a more diverse intake with complex needs. Therefore, should this proposal go ahead, selective schools will need to draw on the skills within the non-selective schools to consider, plan and prepare how they will meet the complex needs of children who are predominantly served within the non-selective education system currently. In addition, this green paper recognises the poor performance of disadvantaged pupils in selective school areas so any expansion of Grammar schools into non-selective areas could risk even poorer performance for those disadvantaged learners are unable to access the provision.

Whilst the DfE's 'Adhoc Data Release of Parental Requests for School Places' in October 2016 does demonstrate that there is a demand for grammar school places, it does not account for the fact that in Lincolnshire alone, 40% of those who made a first choice preference for a selective school place did not pass the entry examination. Therefore, the true need of places will be dependent on the entry mechanism to enter selective schools and clarification around the mechanism for selection is required to respond fully.

20 What can we do to support the creation of either wholly or partially new selective schools?

Lincolnshire offers a partial selective system and we would welcome the opportunity to talk to the DfE about how we can make the educational system work more effectively so all pupils' access good schools and achieve their aspirations.

We would also very much welcome a discussion on how we should move towards locality based results model, the need for proportionate assessment of schools to reflect the contribution they are making to the education system and an inspection system which reflects the complexities of what 'good' looks like across an education sector that is equitable, transferable and makes precise links between strengths and needs within the sector.

21 How can we support existing non-selective schools to become selective?

As Lincolnshire offers a partial selective system, we are not in a position to answer this question.

22 Are these the right conditions to ensure that selective schools improve the quality of non-selective places?

As Lincolnshire offers a partial selective system, we are not in a position to answer this question.

23 Are there other conditions that we should consider as requirements for new or expanding selective schools, and existing non-selective schools becoming selective?

As Lincolnshire offers a partial selective system, we are not in a position to answer this question.

24 What is the right proportion of children from lower income households for new selective schools to admit?

This question fails to recognise that we must provide choice for parents and children should be supported to access the right school for them, which offers the curriculum and the facilities which will enable them to achieve their aspirations.

25 Are these sanctions the right ones to apply to schools that fail to meet the requirements?

We believe that a system should be encouraging and motivational and not sanction based. Schools and Trust should be incentivised to contribute fully to sector led school improvement.

26 If not, what other sanctions might be effective in ensuring selective schools contribute to the number of good non-selective places locally?

We believe that a system should be encouraging and motivational and not sanction based. Schools and Trusts should be incentivised to contribute fully to sector led school improvement.

27 How can we best ensure that new and expanding selective schools and existing non-selective schools becoming selective are located in the areas that need good school places the most?

The DFE should work with local authorities to ensure that local intelligence is sought and community needs are clearly identified to support communities. This is crucial in minimising additional spending unnecessarily from the public purse around place planning, home school transport costs, and capital improvement projects.

28 How can we best ensure that the benefits of existing selective schools are brought to bear on local non-selective schools?

Lincolnshire has a record of selective schools and non-selective schools working successfully together through a range of collaborative working arrangements. Enabling expertise, staff, initiatives and opportunities to be shared, via commissioned arrangement where necessary, has had many benefits in Lincolnshire's children and young people and the wider education sector.

It is important that we recognise the ability of the non-selective schools to benefit the selective ones and we are disappointed that the consultation fails to recognise this repeatedly. In Lincolnshire, successful non-selective schools have a great deal to offer to selective schools in a number of school improvement activities which is encouraging and counter to the tone within the proposals.

29 Are there other things we should ask of existing selective schools to ensure they support non-selective education in their areas?

Yes - Lincolnshire has a record of existing selective schools supporting non-selective schools and vice versa; schools offer reciprocal training on curriculum matters such as assessment and tracking. Where there is excellent practice, schools work collaboratively to enhance the wider locality based provision and choice for families. They offer enrichment and extension, providing community learning improvement in a co-ordinated way.

We would welcome the opportunity to talk to the DfE about how a locality based results model would ensure this best practice became the norm, allowing all children and young people to thrive.

30 Should the conditions we intend to apply to new or expanding selective schools also apply to existing selective schools?

We would want to understand the conditions before responding to this question.

31 Are these the right alternative requirements to replace the 50% rule?

We would want to understand the conditions before responding to this question.

32 How else might we ensure that faith schools espouse and deliver a diverse, multi-faith offer to parents within a faith school environment?

We should consider diversity not just on faith, but ethnicity and level of deprivation to ensure school populations are representative of a community. Ofsted must continue to hold schools to account on social mobility commitments.

33 Are there other ways in which we can effectively monitor faith schools for integration and hold them to account for performance?

Yes - family satisfaction and feedback are key to help us to understand if their preference for a faith school has delivered what was expected; many parents choose faith schools as a defining element of lifestyle which adds diversity to the education system in itself.

Faith schools are inclusive of their community and we would want inclusion to be monitored as evidence of their performance.

There is a need to continue to challenge illegal schools including those that are faith based and to ensure the guidance enables the DfE and Ofsted to act promptly to safeguard children.

34 Are there other sanctions we could apply to faith schools that do not meet this requirement?

We do not believe that the application of these sanctions provide motivation for schools to adapt. Many parents, communities and families enjoy the ethos and way in which a faith school operates and approaches education of today. Some parents consider this keenly when selecting a school, so taking its unique character away may only result in parents and children being unhappy. Therefore, alternative sanctions would need to be considered so that supporting the sector is incentivised and faith schools are motivated to engage even more broadly than they already do. Ofsted has a key role to play in incentivising schools through the accountability framework.

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